

## Sūrah Ghāshiyah

### Central Theme and Relationship with the Preceding Sūrah

This *sūrah* forms a pair with Sūrah A'lā, the previous *sūrah*.

There is no essential difference between the central themes of both *sūrahs*. Just as the previous *sūrah* sounds assurance to the Prophet (sws), this *sūrah* also sounds assurance to him. However, there is a difference between the two as regard their style of address, methodology of reasoning and their brief or comprehensive treatment of motifs. Initially, in this *sūrah* is depicted the difference in fate which the good and the wicked will meet in the Hereafter and it is proven that this fate is an obvious outcome of the attributes of power, providence and mercy of the Creator of this universe. At the end, the motif “remind them if reminding them is beneficial,” (97:8) briefly referred to the previous *sūrah* is explained: the responsibility of the Prophet (sws) is only to communicate the truth. It is not his responsibility to force others to accept it. He is told not to go after the stubborn and the obdurate; he should leave their matter to God who is enough to deal with them.

### Analysis of the Discourse

**Verses (1-6):** A mention of the fate to be encountered by people who live in this world in complete disregard to the next world.

**Verses (7-16):** A portrayal of the success and triumph of people who live in this world while fearing the next.

**Verses (17-20):** A reference to certain prominent signs of the world which show that the Creator of this universe has great power and wisdom, He is very compassionate and is very gracious and affable to His creatures. It is the obvious outcome of His attributes of power, mercy, wisdom and providence that He one day bring about a day of justice in which He rewards the pious and punishes the wicked. If this world continues without the advent of such a day, then this will negate all these attributes of God; in fact, it will, God forbid, prove that He has made this world to be a place which is not governed by moral laws and that good and evil are equal in His eyes.

**Verses (21-26):** The Prophet (sws) is assured that what he is warning people of is an obvious reality; signs which point to it are very manifest. He should not despair and lose hope because of the attitude of the

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stubborn. His responsibility is to only communicate the truth. The Almighty will not hold him accountable if people accept or reject it. He should submit the matter of those who are not willing to listen to him to God. They will one day have to return to God and He will definitely call them to account.

### Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْغَاشِيَةِ (١) وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَاشِعَةٌ (٢) عَامِلَةٌ نَاصِبَةٌ (٣) تَصَلَّى نَارًا  
حَامِيَةً (٤) تُسْقَى مِنْ عَيْنٍ آيِيَةٍ (٥) لَيْسَ لَهُمْ طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ صَرِيحٍ (٦) لَا يُسْنِنُ وَلَا يُغْنِي  
مِنْ جُوعٍ (٧) وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَاعِمَةٌ (٨) لِسَعْيِهَا رَاضِيَةٌ (٩) فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ (١٠) لَا تَسْمَعُ  
فِيهَا لَآغِيَةً (١١) فِيهَا عَيْنٌ جَارِيَةٌ (١٢) فِيهَا سُرُرٌ مَرْفُوعَةٌ (١٣) وَأَكْوَابٌ مَوْضُوعَةٌ (١٤)  
وَنَمَارِقُ مَصْفُوفَةٌ (١٥) وَزَرَارِيُّ مَبْثُوثَةٌ (١٦) أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ (١٧)  
وَالِى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ (١٨) وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ (١٩) وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ  
سُطِحَتْ (٢٠) فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ (٢١) لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُسَيِّرٍ (٢٢) إِلَّا مَنْ تَوَلَّى وَكَفَرَ  
(٢٣) فَيُعَذِّبُهُ اللَّهُ الْعَذَابَ الْأَكْبَرَ (٢٤) إِنَّ إِلَيْنَا إِيَابَهُمْ (٢٥) ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا حِسَابَهُمْ (٢٦)

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

Has the news of the all-engulfing calamity reached you?! Many faces on that day will be downcast and worn out. They will enter the blazing fire. They will be made to drink from a sizzling spring. Their only food will be thorny bushes, which will neither fatten them nor satisfy their hunger. (1-7)

Many faces on that day will be fresh, pleased with their endeavours, in a lofty garden where they will hear no useless talk. In it, there will be a running spring. In it, there will be thrones set high, and goblets well-arranged, and carpets well set out, and cushions spread all over. (8-16)

Do they not see the camels, how they have been made? And do they not behold the sky, how it has been raised high? And do they not look at the mountains, how they have been set aloft? And do they not see the earth, how it has been spread out. (17-20)

Just remind them, for your duty is only to remind them; you are not to force them. As for he who turns away and denies, God will punish him gravely. Indeed, to Us will they return. Then it is upon Us to call them to account. (21-26)

**Explanation**

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْعَاشِيَةِ (١)<sup>1</sup>

Questions expressed in such style are not meant to elicit an answer; they are meant to express the horror or majesty of something. The address in the verse can also be considered as general, however intrinsic evidence shows that the Prophet (sws) is addressed. Consequently, giving due regard to this aspect, the words at the end of the *sūrah* are: (فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ (٨٨:٢١) (just remind them, for your duty is only to remind them, (21:88)).

The word *عَاشِيَةٌ* means “something which engulfs and enshrouds”. Here in this verse it is used as an attribute for the Day of Judgement. The reason for this is that the calamity of this day would be all-embracing; no one will be able to escape from it. Though the news (*حَدِيثُ*) of this calamity is described to the Prophet (sws); however, the purpose, as will be evident from subsequent verses, is to inform the disbelievers who in the first place did not even believe in the Hereafter, and if for some reason they did, they had no fear of it because they thought that they would be blessed with even more than what they had been given in this world.

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَاشِعَةٌ (٢) غَامِلَةٌ نَّاصِبَةٌ (٣)<sup>2</sup>

As pointed out earlier, the question mentioned in the previous verse was not meant to elicit an answer; it was only meant to warn people that they should clearly hear what is being sounded to them. After this, the Qur’ān has itself replied that many faces on that day will be downcast and worn out.

The word *خَاشِعَةٌ* means “downcast and turned downwards”, while *غَامِلَةٌ* means “tired because of hard work” and *نَّاصِبَةٌ* means “worn out”. The implication is that when against their hope they would have to face Hell because of their misdeeds they would become pale with fear.

Although the word *وُجُوهٌ* (faces) is used to imply people, the word *وُجُوهٌ* is used to refer to their inner state because it is the face which is the most expressive of one’s inner state.

تَصْلَى نَارًا حَامِيَةً (٤) تُسْقَى مِنْ عَيْنٍ آتِيَةٍ (٥)<sup>3</sup>

The verses mention the cause of the anxiety and apprehension

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1. Has the news of the all-engulfing calamity reached you?!
  2. Many faces on that day will be downcast and worn out.
  3. They will enter the blazing fire. They will be made to drink from a sizzling spring.
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mentioned in the previous verses. The word *أَيَّه* means “something which is boiling and seething.”

It is evident from other places of the Qur’ān that the anxiety of the sinners mentioned in this verse relates to the time when it becomes certain to them that they would be thrown into Hell:

وَوُجُوهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِآسِرَةٍ تَتَّبَعُنَّ أَنْ يَفْعَلَ بِهَا فَاقِرَةٌ (٧٥: ٢٤-٢٥)

And some faces will be gloomy on that Day apprehending that there is going to befall them that which breaks their backs. (75: 24-25)

Generally, people have understood that this state of the sinners is the one which will result after they have been cast into Hell; however, this is not true. Once these sinners are cast into Hell, their faces will not merely be anxious; they will be dragged on the fire and whatever else will happen to them is mentioned elsewhere in the Qur’ān.

لَيْسَ لَهُمْ طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ ضَرِيعٍ (٦) لَا يُسْمِنُ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِنْ جُوعٍ (٧)<sup>4</sup>

After food, this is a mention of the water which will be given to the sinners in Hell. *ضَرِيع* is a thorny and poisonous bush which no animal touches.

The purpose of the sentence is not to say they will not be fed with anything else except thorny bushes; the word *إِلَّا* is used here as a severed exception (*istithnā munqaṭi’*). To convey the above meaning, *ضَرِيع* should have belonged to the genre of edibles in any way. When this is not so, the exception is only meant to convey the fact that when they would find nothing to eat they will, out of frustration, try to eat the thorny bushes available to them there. This negation also does not refute the fact that other similar things would be present for the dwellers of Hell and which they would be compelled to eat. Thus it is mentioned in another verse that these sinners will have to consume *zaqqūm*:

إِنَّ شَجَرَةَ الزَّقُّومِ طَعَامٌ الْأَثِيمِ (٤٤: ٤٣-٤٤)

Indeed, the bush of *zaqqūm* shall be the food of sinners. (44:43-44)

Similarly, another verse mentions *ghislīn*:

4. Their only food will be thorny bushes, which will neither fatten them nor satisfy their hunger.

وَلَا طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ غَسِيلٍ لَا يَأْكُلُهُ إِلَّا الْخَاطِئُونَ (٦٩: ٣٦-٣٧)

And their food shall be the fluid in which wounds are washed. Only the sinners will eat it. (69:36-37)

It is evident from this that the dwellers of Hell shall not be given any food; they shall be given just those things which are not only are not edibles but also those which can only be swallowed by the dwellers of Hell.

Consider now the next verse: لَا يُسْمِنُ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِنْ جُوعٍ. The uses of food are two: to provide energy to the body and to satisfy the pangs of hunger. However, what will be served to the dwellers of Hell will fulfil neither of these uses. They will have to go through the agony of only chewing and swallowing it.

وُجُوهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَاعِمَةٌ (٨) لِسَعْيِهَا رَاضِيَةٌ (٩) فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ (١٠)<sup>5</sup>

In these verses, the state of the believers is described. In Sūrah Qiyāmah, this state is described in the following words: وُجُوهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ تَاضِرَةٌ (٧٥: ٢٢-٢٣) (some faces will be joyous on that Day awaiting the graciousness of their Lord, (75:23-24)).

The previous verses mention the dejectedness, fatigue and frustration of the rejecters of the Day of Judgement. These verses, in contrast, mention the believers who spent their life for the Hereafter and succeeded in their test. Their faces will reflect the glow and radiance of eternal triumph.

The expression لِسَعْيِهَا رَاضِيَةٌ shows that their faces will glow and sparkle because the fruits of their labour will be before them. They toiled in the previous world to harvest these results. They will be fully satisfied with this outcome that they were generously rewarded for their deeds and the Almighty fulfilled all His promises He made with them. Details are forthcoming in the subsequent verses and the next sūrah also mentions a specific aspect in this regard. God willing, I will attempt to unfold some of its subtle implications.

The verse فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ describes their abode in the Hereafter. They will be lodged in gardens situated on high ground. Arabs cherished gardens which were situated in lofty places and which were encircled by tall date-palms so that they appear elegant from far off and are also protected from calamities such as scorching winds and floods.

5. Many faces on that day will be fresh, pleased with their endeavours, in a lofty garden.

لَا تَسْمَعُ فِيهَا لَا غِيَةَ<sup>٦</sup> (١١)

The Qur'ān mentions at various places that the dwellers of Hell will start to curse each other as soon as they enter it: they will blame others for misleading them and had they not misled them, they would have remained rightly guided. Leaders and their followers will have an argument there. The followers will demand that their leaders be given double punishment because they misled them. The leaders will reply that they guided their followers to what they themselves believed and it is the followers who deliberately followed them and thus called for their own doom. On the other hand, the dwellers of Paradise will welcome one another with salutations and congratulations as a victorious team does. They will meet one another in a blissful mood. Love and sincerity will abound for one another. This atmosphere is portrayed in Sūrah Wāqī'ah thus:

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا تَأْثِيمًا إِلَّا قِيلًا سَلَامًا سَلَامًا (٥٦: ٢٥-٢٦)

There they shall hear no worthless conversation nor sinful speech. The atmosphere will resound with greetings of peace. (56:25-26)

Also worthy of note is the fact that the liquor drunk by the dwellers of Paradise will not make them lose their senses or make them delirious. It will not intoxicate them so that they have no control over their speech.

فِيهَا عَيْنٌ جَارِيَةٌ<sup>٧</sup> (١٢)

After a portrayal of the blissful atmosphere of Paradise, this verse portrays its picturesque sights. The spring mentioned here is only the one used to water the orchard. It does not entail that there will only be a single spring there. Consequently, Sūrah Dahr mentions multiple springs and their distributaries; however, the nature of these blessings, as is explained above, will be entirely different. There is no contradiction between these two statements.

فِيهَا سُرُرٌ مَرْفُوعَةٌ (١٣) وَأَكْوَابٌ مَوْضُوعَةٌ (١٤) وَنَمَارِقُ مَصْفُوفَةٌ (١٥) وَزُرَّائِي مَبْنُوتَةٌ<sup>٨</sup> (١٦)

These verses mention what will be available to the dwellers of Paradise for their comfort and luxurious living. Various *sūrahs* mention various

6. Where they will hear no useless talk.

7. In it, there will be a running spring.

8. In it, there will be thrones set high, and goblets well-arranged, and carpets well set out, and cushions spread all over.

details of this. In most cases, this difference relates to brevity and its elaboration; however, in some instances, it also takes into account the difference in status of the dwellers of Paradise. Moreover, while reading them, one should also keep in mind that this description is in the form of parables and an unseen world can only be described through parables and for this the only option is to borrow words from the language and culture the addressees are generally aware of.

The expression *سُرُرٌ مَّرْفُوعَةٌ* shows that the dwellers of Paradise will sit on lofty thrones. This mention is in accordance with the kings and nobles of Arabia at that time. However, Paradise will be according to what each of its dwellers desires. He will find it embellished to his taste and wishes.

In the expression *أَكْوَابٌ مَوْضُوعَةٌ* the word *أَكْوَابٌ* is the plural of *كُوبٌ* which is the same as “a cup”. It is used alike for a cup, a mug and goblet. The word *مَوْضُوعَةٌ* means “well-arranged”.

The word *نَمَارِقٌ مَصْفُوفَةٌ* in *نَمَارِقٌ مَصْفُوفَةٌ* refers to carpets and rugs. The implication is that the sitting places of the dwellers of Paradise will have carpets arranged in a consecutive sequence and they will be adjacent to one another. There will be no empty space.

The word *زُرِّيَّةٌ* in *زُرِّيَّةٌ مَبْثُوتَةٌ* is the plural of *زُرِّيَّةٌ*. It refers to pillows and cushions. The implication is that pillows and cushions will be scattered all over the carpets. They will act as comfortable seats to them wherever they want to sit. Today, sofas are in vogue; however, they too are decked with cushions.

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ (١٧) وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ (١٨) وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ  
كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ (١٩) وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ (٢٠)<sup>9</sup>

In these verses, people who were leading their lives while remaining indifferent to the reward and punishment of the Hereafter referred to above are cautioned. Their attention is directed to some very conspicuous signs in the world around them. They are urged to reflect on these signs which bear evidence to the attributes of providence, power, wisdom and majesty of the Almighty. So blatant is this evidence that any person who has even a slight inclination to accepting the truth cannot deny the reward and punishment of the Hereafter. The implication is that in the presence of these signs why are they still adamant in demanding to see some sign of punishment or the Day of Judgement itself in order to profess faith in the

9. Do they not see the camels, how they have been made? And do they not behold the sky, how it has been raised high? And do they not look at the mountains, how they have been set aloft? And do they not see the earth, how it has been spread out

Prophet (sws).

Their attention is directed foremost to the camel. Why don't they reflect on something which is their everyday companion; it remains with them wherever they go and serves all their needs. It is completely obedient to them and even risks its life for them. It is the Almighty who has created it with all these wondrous qualities. The camel is an example of docility to man and in spite of being so huge and massive, people can lead it anywhere by a nose-string. It walks behind them in total compliance. It is their companion at home and during travels. It carries all their burdens and is like a ship for them in desert journeys. For weeks, it fights thirst and hunger and fills its stomach with thorny bushes and never disobeys its master however tough the errand assigned. Its flesh, hide and milk are of use to his master and even his faeces have their benefit. What needs to be reflected upon is: did the camel with such multifarious benefits come into existence of its own accord and was it mere coincidence that man tamed it into submission? Or was it that the Almighty created it through His profound power and wisdom and put it in the service of man? Obviously, sense and reason vouch for the second of these possibilities. If this second possibility is the only acceptable one, then is it not the responsibility of man to lead his life while remaining grateful to the Almighty. For it is the Almighty Who blessed him with these comforts of life even though it was not his right. If he does not show gratitude, he should get ready to face the Almighty and be held accountable before him and face punishment for denying all His favours.

It should be kept in consideration that a camel has been mentioned because certain of its characteristics alluded to above. The purpose is to remind man of all the animals which the Almighty has put into his service and on which depend his livelihood. At other places, the Qur'ān has also named these animals and the purpose of this mention is to make man realize that every favour entails gratitude to its bestower. An obvious outcome of this is that it is essential that a day come when the grateful are rewarded for their gratefulness and the ungrateful are punished for their ungratefulness. In the *tafsīr* of Sūrah 'Ādiyāt, this issue shall be discussed at length.

Consider now the verse: *وَالِى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ* (and do they not behold the sky, how it has been raised high?!). Since the purpose, as referred to earlier, is to mention prominent signs, once an animal as tall as the camel was mentioned, attention was immediately directed to the heavens: Why don't people reflect on how its roof was raised high? The implication is that such a limitless expanse was raised high without any pillars. Even stranger is the fact that the time which has elapsed on it is also unknown but the most competent of engineers with the most powerful of



telescopes is unable to point to any minutest flaw in it. Even more weird is the fact that no one knows how far off it is from the earth; however, the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars suspended in it provide light and heat to the earth and are a means of sustaining life on it and are a source of its embellishment too.

Man should reflect that if such is the extent of the power and wisdom of the Creator that He can make the heavens, will it be difficult for Him to re-create man once he is reduced to dust? Consequently, at a number of places, the Qur'ān has asked man whether re-creating him is more difficult or creating the heavens.

Consider now the verse: *وَالِىَ الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ* (and do they not look at the mountains, how they have been set?) After the eyes are urged to observe the sky and its majesty, they are exhorted to look at the earth and attention is directed at the most prominent sign of God's power and wisdom that lies between the sky and the earth: the mountains. They maintain the balance of the earth lest it should tilt on one side together with everyone. They also control the winds and the clouds so that they cause rain at certain places in accordance with the will and wisdom of God. Even though they are made of rocks, providence has made provisions of streams and rivulets of water to flow from them for the benefit of the creation. They contain countless treasures of priceless worth hidden within them. Man is constantly in the process of discovering these treasures and using them for the development of the society. Among them are mountains which are insurmountable; however, the Almighty has taken out passes and passages through them so that they do not cause hindrance in communication between people of various nations. Man should reflect that is not all this a testimony to the great power and wisdom of the Creator and to His all-embracing providence. He should further deliberate that will the Creator Who has such attributes leave man unaccountable for all his deeds; will He not bring a Day in which He holds everyone accountable for his deeds and reward and punish people accordingly? Is not this reward and punishment an obvious requirement of His providence and wisdom? Can anyone claim that this is beyond His power?

Consider next the verse *وَالِىَ الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ* (and do they not see the earth, how it has been spread out?). The eyes are now directed from the mountains to the earth. Man should see how it contains various things in each and every place to nurture and nourish him. They are able to make houses in its outspread lands. Its fields contain their crops and orchards. Its springs, wells and rivulets supply water to these crops and orchards. Its forests and valleys contain limitless resources to feed their animals

and livestock. Man should reflect on all this and think that the Being Who has placed them in a house that He has built for them and which very efficiently caters for all their needs, will He become indifferent to the way these inhabitants lead their lives? Will He not differentiate those among them who lead their lives according to His will and who show pride and vanity by considering all these favours as an inheritance received from their forefathers. Intellect, obviously, endorses the fact that He should deal differently with the two categories. If He does not do so, then this would, God forbid, mean that either He is insensitive and unintelligent and devoid of the awareness of good and evil or is absolutely helpless and feeble. However, the being whose signs of power, wisdom, providence and glory one has witnessed and which are alluded to in these verses can neither be regarded as someone who is unaware or someone who has no sense of honour; similarly, He can also not be regarded as someone who is powerless and helpless. When this is a fact, then it shall have to be believed that by settling these inhabitants in this house, He wants to test and try them. One day, the period of time allotted for this trial will end and He will gather all mankind and show them the good and bad deeds that they did. Those who would have led their lives in accordance with His wishes will be blessed with His favours and those who created disorder will be punished for their misdeeds.

The questions posed in the words *كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ* (how it has been created) and *كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ* (how it has been raised high) are very terse and brief. Other *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān elaborate upon this brevity. The explanation afforded above is actually in the light shed by these *sūrahs* and has been limited to what was essential for the explanation of this *sūrah*. If someone wants to study all the claims which the Qur'ān makes by citing the above mentioned things as evidence, he would need to study all the verses of the Qur'ān where the sky, earth, mountains and camels are mentioned in some way.

The sequence of the discourse is also very unique here. It combines both ascending and descending order sequences. The purpose, we have indicated above, is to direct one's attention to some prominent signs so that the stubborn are left with no excuse. Thus the most conspicuous of things in close proximity is the camel whose benefits no one among the addressees could have denied. After this, attention is directed to the sky and then when it was to be directed to the earth since mountains lie in between, attention was focused on them. After the mountains, focusing attention to the out-stretched earth creates a natural attraction in it.

Two of these signs, the camel and the earth, are prominent with regard

to providence and two others, the sky and the mountains, are prominent with regard to God's power and wisdom. On these attributes of the Creator rests the philosophy of the Hereafter and the reward and punishment one will encounter in it. We have alluded to these aspects at various places in this *tafsīr*.

فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ (٢١) لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ (٢٢)<sup>10</sup>

After a citation of arguments to substantiate the warnings sounded by the Qur'ān, the discourse shifts and addresses the Prophet (sws); he is assured that those who are denying his warnings are not doing so because his warnings are not well-substantiated, for signs and arguments in their favour are numerous all around them; the fact of the matter is that they are of benefit only to those who have fear of God. In the previous *sūrah*, such people are referred by the words: سَيَذَكِّرُ مَنْ يَخْشَى (٨٧: ١٠) (he who has fear will benefit from it, (87:10)). As far as people whose hearts have hardened are concerned, they will not be able to benefit from these signs. They are referred to by the words, وَيَتَجَنَّبُهَا الْأَشَقَى (٨٧: ١١) (and the wretched will evade it (87:11)) in the previous *sūrah*. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should continue to preach and remind them irrespective of the consequences and rest assured that his responsibility is only to preach and remind people. It is not his responsibility that he should necessarily be able to make them accept faith. God has sent him to remind people and He will not be responsible if his addressees do not embrace faith.

إِلَّا مَنْ تَوَلَّى وَكَفَرَ (٢٣) فَيُعَذِّبُهُ اللَّهُ الْعَذَابَ الْأَكْبَرَ (٢٤)<sup>11</sup>

Before the particle of exception إِلَّا an ellipsis of some words has occurred which can be determined through contextual indications. If these suppressed words are unfolded, the whole discourse would be something to the effect: "Those who are blessed with the urge for guidance, will benefit from your message; as for those who turn away and deny, the Almighty will gravely punish them."

The expression الْعَذَابَ الْأَكْبَرَ refers to the torment of Hell which will be the greatest among the torments of this world. No other torment of this world can rival it neither in extent nor in perpetuation. In the previous *sūrah*, this torment is called النَّارُ الْكُبْرَى (the great fire); however, there is no difference in meaning between the two.

10. Just remind them, for your duty is only to remind them; you are not to force them.

11. As for he who turns away and denies, God will punish him gravely.

إِنَّ إِلَيْنَا إِيَابَهُمْ (٢٥) ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا حِسَابَهُمْ (٢٦)<sup>12</sup>

The implication of these verses is that no one should make the mistake of thinking that what has been said above is merely a threat; on the contrary, it is an indubitable reality. It is to God that everyone will return and to no one else and it is incumbent upon God to take account and reward or punish people accordingly. If the Almighty does not do so, then this will mean that this world is merely a playground of children and a meaningless and purposeless creation whereas the fact of the matter is that its Creator does nothing which is bereft of wisdom.

With the blessing of God, I come to the end of the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah*. وهو الموفق للخير والسداد (it is only He who impels a person to virtue and to what is right).

11<sup>th</sup> November, 1979 AD

20<sup>th</sup> Dhū al-Hijjah, 1399 AH

Lahore

(Translated from *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* by Shehzad Saleem)

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12. Indeed, to Us will they return. Then it is upon Us to call them to account.